

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 31, 2021



MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition

[University Galleries of Illinois State](#) University is pleased to present *Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us* from August 11 through December 16, 2021.

What the stars can't tell us presents paintings and sculptures by Chicago-based artist and Illinois State University alumna (and former track athlete) [Caroline Kent](#). This exhibition encompasses two galleries: one featuring large-scale paintings created from 2015 through 2021, and another premiering a site-responsive installation conceived in relationship to the artist's simultaneous solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Derived from the title of one of Kent's paintings, the exhibition title references humanity's long-term reliance on the cosmos for navigation and timekeeping, while addressing how much of the universe remains invisible and unknown. It also alludes to the limitations that exist in conflict with our desire to know anything fully.

Through paintings, sculptures, installations, drawings, performances, and books, Kent uses abstraction to explore how, in her words, "language mediates or becomes a barrier" between people. The artist's work was influenced, in part, by her time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Romania—from immersing herself in a new language, to being surrounded by houses painted with the chalky pastel hues that now recur in her own paintings—as well as watching films with the closed captioning turned on to appreciate the possibilities of translation. She writes, "I think of these new paintings as formulas or equations situated inside the cosmos; the cosmos here being metaphorical for a kind of space that invites one to comprehend in new ways."

Kent's archive of improvisational cut-paper drawings informs her carefully constructed paintings. Hung like tapestries on the wall, the 8- to 9-foot-tall paintings feature choreographies of bold geometric shapes floating into and out of expanses of black canvas. They seem to collapse time and space, with forms evoking ancient architecture, hieroglyphic writing, stylized alphabets, modern sculptures, and futuristic diagrams. For example, in the exhibition's titular painting, an angular seafoam green form hovers above magenta and lavender archways and is flanked by a parade of canary, tangerine, eggshell, and cobalt forms, while traces of off-kilter ellipses and ghosts of wavy fringe emerge from below the surface. The interplay among these mysterious symbols prompts contemplation about legibility, translation, and temporality. Meanwhile, a new series of small paintings on raw linen functions collectively like a poem, in which the visual language is abbreviated and condensed in its form.

This exhibition is the focus of multiple educational programs. (See below for details.) Free virtual and in-person curator-led tours are available by appointment for the duration of the exhibition. Caroline Kent will lead a gallery walk and deliver an artist lecture. University Galleries' staff will lead art-making workshops for ISU students, families, and K-12 students. University Galleries continues collaborating with the Children's Discovery Museum for Art Around You, a series of virtual exhibition tours and workshops for children ages 7 through 10.

Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us is curated by [Kendra Paitz](#), University Galleries' director and chief curator. This exhibition is supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Alice and Fannie Fell Trust, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund. A publication is forthcoming in 2022.

Biography

Caroline Kent's work is included in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, among others. Her work has been exhibited at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; California African American Museum, Los Angeles; The Flag Art Foundation, New York; Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles; Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Chicago; Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco; and Soap Factory, Minneapolis, among others. Kent has received a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant; McKnight Fellowship for Visual Arts; Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant; and Jerome Foundation Fellowship. Her work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art News*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Sixty Inches from Center*, and *Newcity Art*. Kent received her M.F.A. from University of Minnesota and her B.S. from Illinois State University. The artist is represented by PATRON Gallery, Chicago; Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles; and Casey Kaplan, New York. Kent lives and works in Chicago.

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Events and programming

All events are free and open to the public.

- August 11 through December 14: Virtual and in-person curator-led exhibition tours are available for classes, community groups, and individuals by appointment. Contact gallery@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule.
- August 11 through December 16: A painting by the late artist Jacqueline Richards, Caroline Kent's painting professor when she was a student at Illinois State University, will be on view at University Galleries in our *Spotlight on the Permanent Collection*.
- September (date and time to be announced): Artist lecture by Caroline Kent. Free and no reservations required.
- September 4 at 1:00 p.m.: Art Around You, a virtual exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum. Participants (ages 7-10) can register for this free program at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net. This program is made possible by an Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture grant awarded to the CDM.
- September 18, from noon to 2:00 p.m.: Family art-making workshop related to Caroline Kent's exhibition. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. Free and no reservations required.
- October 2, from noon to 2:00 p.m.: Drop-in art-making activities related to Caroline Kent's exhibition. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. Free and no reservations required. This event is scheduled in conjunction with Illinois State University's Family Weekend.
- October 15 at 3:00 p.m.: Gallery walk with alumna Caroline Kent. Meet the artist and hear her discuss works in the current exhibition. This event is scheduled in conjunction with Illinois State University's Homecoming Week. Free and no reservations required.
- November 13, from noon to 2:00 p.m.: Family art-making workshop related to Caroline Kent's exhibition. Materials and instruction provided by University Galleries' staff. Free and no reservations required.
- November 20 at 1:00 pm: Art Around You, a virtual exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum. Participants (ages 7-10) can register for this free program at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net. This program is made possible by an Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture grant awarded to the CDM.
- Educator resources, activities for children and youth, art lesson videos, and an exhibition tour video will be available on the exhibition web page.
- Additional events will be announced via University Galleries' website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.

University Galleries

University Galleries, a unit in the [Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts](#), is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact gallery@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.